1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

dug in the sandy soil between the ankles and the infant then has a simple and comforting toilet ready made for it by the mother. Afterwards its loins are washed and the hole covered up with sand. During the entire infant stage breast-feeding is carried on easily and simply upon demand by the infant for the breast. Indeed the breast is generally used as a pacifier.

A typical scene in a mother's hut illustrates the way in which the introduction of a new baby to society is carried out. The mother and her friends sit around chatting and they pass the baby around, dandling it in turn, although the baby remains with the mother for a large part of the time. A very common topic of conversation at such times is, quite unsurprisingly, the new baby. But unlike a similar group of American ladies most of the talk is *to* and not *about* the baby. The mother and many of those present tell the uncomprehending infant in sing-song voices about its kindred, "So-and-so is your father, so-and-so is your brother, so-and-so is your sister," and so on through a vast complex of kinship links on both the mother's and the father's side of the family. The infant is also told in the same way about its neighborhood, its section of the town, or its village, its political leaders, and so on. "So-and-so is your village head, so-and-so is your district head, and this is your tribe and this is your emirate, and this is your *Shehu*, and so-and-so is your Waziri." The family occupation is also mentioned and how soon the infant is going to help in such-and-such activities around the compound and grow up into successful adulthood within the framework of all the associations and expectations that are referred to constantly.

Why tell a baby about its social connections, occupational expectations, political affiliations, and so on? Certainly later on, when it can understand a little more of the language, such talk is a means of initiating it into the social groupings of the society. However at this stage another function is performed. The child is a new member of the society, and it is being introduced into and given a recognizable place in its social setting. The new member means new relationships. So-and-so who did not have a younger brother's son, now has one; someone else now has a new cousin and perhaps a future spouse; or someone else now has a sister's son or an additional one. The coming of the *tiful* or infant creates changes because a new member has been added and in introducing it to society people are asked to shift their understanding of the organizations which now must include this new member. By constantly referring to these new relationships during the infant's first few months people close to the family affirm to themselves and finally to others the fact that many relationships are different now that the new baby has arrived safely.

As far as training goes, the *tiful* is too young to be very harshly dealt with or to be told not to do this or that. Its primary task is to survive and grow into a useful, law-abiding, member of its community.

Childhood

Infancy ends as weaning begins, about the end of the eighteenth month although a good deal of variation exists in actual practice so that many are weaned earlier. In general weaning is carried out with a matter-of-fact attitude as if to say,

1: Cohen

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/For information on the Kanuri practice of child fosterage, see category 855./

587 The levirate among the Kanuri is called fatorongabe. A man must marry the widow of his elder brother (yaga); he is not permitted to marry the widow of his younger brother (kərami). At the death of one's wife, one may marry her younger sister, but one is forbidden to marry her elder sister. This, too, is called fatorongabe.

2. Divorce.

586 779 The Koran has a great deal to say about divorce, particularly in Sura II ("The Cow"), and Sura LXV ("Divorce"). It specifically mentions a waiting period of four months (three full menstrual courses for the woman) to determine if the woman is pregnant before the divorce is final and the woman becomes a zogor. A man may divorce his wife twice and take her back again, but after the third time, she must marry another man before she can remarry her first husband. After the waiting period, the husband cannot maliciously retain his former wife or prevent her from marrying another man. If the husband divorces his wife before the marriage is consummated, but after the bride-price has been settled, half of the bride-price should be paid, unless the husband is released from payment, but it is more proper that the husband should forego it. After a divorce, mothers with nursing children should be permitted to let the children nurse for two whole years, while they are supported by the father of the child.

[353]

Kanuri practice concerning divorce operates within the limits dictated by the Koran. The husband divorces his wife by say-

593 eating together) is dropped and the husband and wife often refer to each other by sibling terms.

593 565 In some cases, more often among the upper classes, if a mother and/or father are very young at the time of their first child, a mutual shame-avoidance should obtain between the parents [842] and this child. Informants who knew of this custom (many lower class [853] informants denied its existence) claimed that in such a case the young mother must be pushed and cajoled into giving her breast to the infant because she feels great shame in having given birth so early in her life. However, as soon as the parents have grown up somewhat and taken their place as adult members of the community, the shame-avoidance between them and their first-born dwindles to the more usual shame-respect held between children and their parents.

571 As indicated above, shame(nungu) is a general category which refers to restrictions on behaviour in interpersonal rela- [577] tions. In this sense it is generalized to include all good, proper [834] and moral conduct, both in and out of the kinship system. An individual should feel some nungu whenever he approaches a woman in public and she should keep her eyes to the ground, her head covered, if possible, and only the most necessary conversation should pass 576 between them. These taboos are more stringently practised by mem- [515] bers of the upper classes, although no man, regardless of class [264] ever eats with a woman. All respect behaviour between the lower classes and their social superiors implies some nungu. Thus in the law court an individual must keep his head uncovered and bent down (a woman keeps her head covered and originally spoke through a window from another room), and remain on his knees with feet tucked under his robe and his knees forward. Or again, shoes must be re-

844 after birth. The birth takes place in a sitting position over a warmed wooden bowl. When the infant arrives it is washed and then continually warmed by the female attendants who heat their hands over
• [853] a dish of hot coals and then press the body of the child. Almost immediately attempts are made to have the infant feed at the mother's breast. The placenta is buried in the compound with no ceremony.

[782] Men are barred from any direct participation in the actual birth process, but usually pray heavily and/or employ a mallam (Koranic teacher-priest) to pray for the successful outcome of the
846 birth. During the forty-day confinement period there should be no
[565] sexual intercourse between spouses. Informants stated that strict adherence to the forty-day confinement rule as well as the sexual taboo may vary among the poorer classes where the woman's economic services are more in demand. However, the first eight days after birth are universally accepted as a time of strict confinement and sexual abstinence.

846 During the first eight days of life the infant is known
858 as fatu (the little kitten) or kusoto gana (the little stranger) and is referred to when necessary in these terms. This is a strong tabu time for the parents, and they must be sure to maintain all cultural prescriptions to ensure the safety of the infant. Hardly any mention is made in public of the new arrival. Even its sex is unknown except by a few close female friends of the mother who are expected
[766] to keep the secret. If it dies during this period, the infant does not receive a proper burial, but is unceremoniously interred in the women's section of the compound.

000 On the Friday within the eight-day period, or several

854 shirt, and nothing below the waist, except when they are swaddled to the mother's back. When the baby defecates or urinates indoors, as is often the case, it is cleaned up with no great show of alarm, • 853 until the end of the first eighteen months. Breast feeding occurs on demand, and is used as a pacifier.

Childhood

862 [858] 114] With the onset of childhood, which is formalized at eighteen months by weaning, the overt pressures of socialization begin for the young child. No systematic data were gathered on the effects of this formal change-over from breast-feeding. Everyone knew of a wide range of variation in reaction on the part of the infants; some babies wean easily, others require much more training. In the latter case, the more stringent techniques are utilized, but still with a matter of fact, unperturbed attitude towards the inevitability of the weaning procedure.

In most cases the child has a female grandparent either in the compound or nearby. If not, then a senior woman of the compound or of the family helps with the weaning by offering her dry breast as a pacifier. The mother spreads the process over several months by constantly attempting to replace the breast with a cup. When the child runs to its mother desirous of the breast, the parent refers to it negatively, as dirt, or even excrement. With difficult cases bitter tasting grounds of brown leaves are put on the breasts to discourage continued efforts by the child to obtain the mother's milk.

597 It is just after weaning that most Kanuri adoptions take place. A very rough estimate of adoptions, taken from genealogical data, would put the figure at somewhere between 35-45% for the present